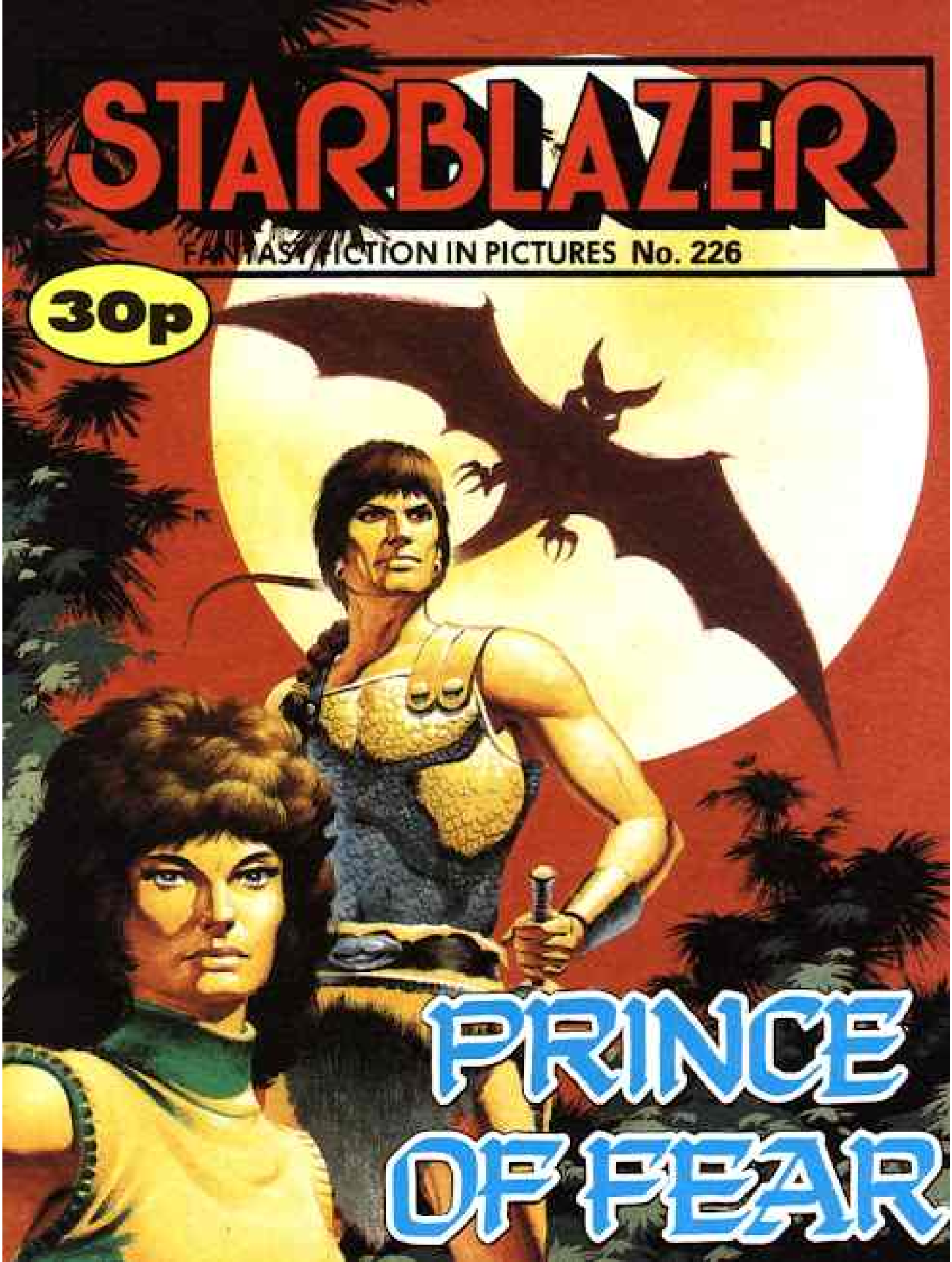
STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 226

30p



PRINCE OF FEAR

We at "Starblazer" want to bring you the very best in Fantasy Fiction. To do that we need *your* help.

So that we can produce the kind of stories you want to read, please fill in the questionnaire on this page and send it to "Starblazer", D. C. Thomson & Co. Ltd., 185 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2HS.

If you don't want to cut your issue of "Starblazer", you can copy the questionnaire onto a sheet of paper.

And there's a chance to win a full-colour print of one of our new-style wraparound covers!

The senders of the ten letters which we judge to be the most informative will each receive one of the prints. We want to hear from you NOW!

Name ..... **Age** .....

Address .....

What kind of science fiction do you most enjoy? Please tick appropriate boxes. If you dislike any type of story, place a cross in the box.

SUPERHEROES	☐	☐	**FANTASY**
DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS	☐	☐	**SWORD AND SORCERY**
POST HOLOCAUST	☐	☐	**HORROR**
ADVENTURE	☐	☐	**STAR WARS**
HUMOUR	☐	☐	**DR. WHO**
			MYSTERY

Where do you normally buy your STARBLAZER? _____

_____

Which is your favourite STARBLAZER story? _____

_____

Which is your favourite character? _____

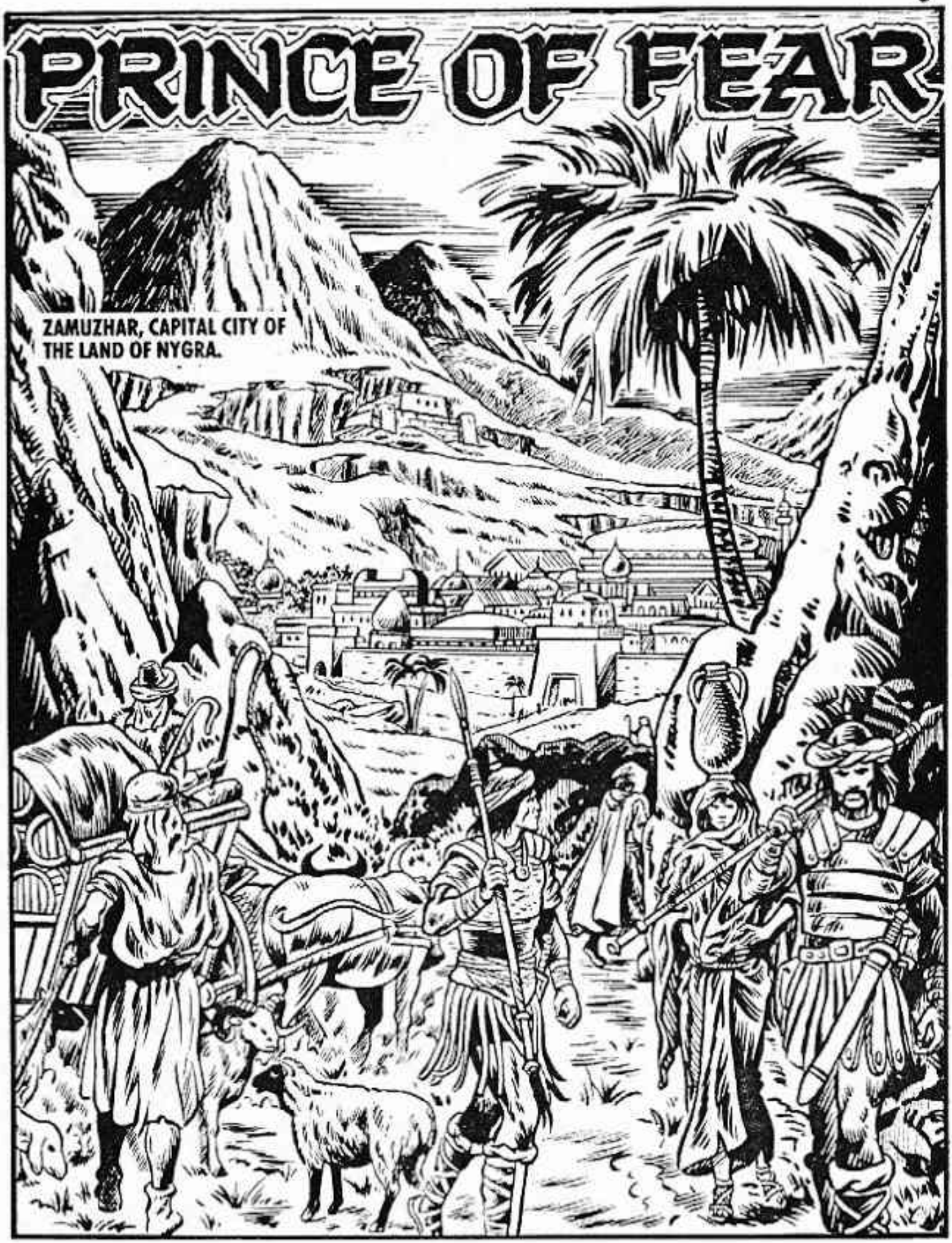
Which is your favourite science fiction movie? _____

_____

Have you any comments to make about STARBLAZER... good or bad? _____

_____

PRINCE OF FEAR



A CITY OF CRAFTSMEN, MERCHANTS, PRIESTS, TRADERS . . .

. . . AND THIEVES.
YONDER LIES THE TEMPLE OF ZOG-YEZID. IT HOUSES A RARE TREASURE — NOT FOR MUCH LONGER IF I HAVE MY WAY TONIGHT.
AGILE AS THE MOUNTAIN BEASTS OF HIS NORTHERN HOMELAND, KAZOR WAS RENOWNED AS AN AUDACIOUS THIEF.

THE PRIEST GUARDS GIVE ALL THEIR ATTENTION TO THE ENTRANCES BELOW.

A PERFECT THROW, AND ANY SOUND WILL HAVE BEEN DROWNED BY THE NOISE FROM THE TAVERN BELOW.

SECURING THE ROPE, KAZOR SWUNG OUT ABOVE THE STREET . . .
HA! A TYPICAL NIGHT IN THIS QUARTER OF THE CITY. FOLK ARE TOO BUSY TO NOTICE ME UP HERE — I HOPE . . .
TONY & ROB'S INN
OUT, YOU TROUBLESOME LOT!
GLADLY! EVEN THE COCKROACHES GET ILL FROM YOUR — HIC — ALE!

MOMENTS LATER —
SO FAR SO GOOD. MY INFORMATION IS THAT THERE IS A CHAMBER WITHIN THESE HIGHER REACHES OF THE TEMPLE WHICH HOUSES A GOLDEN IDOL — A LIKENESS OF THE GOD THE BALD ONES WORSHIP.

ALL OF HIS SENSES ALERT, KAZOR STOLE DOWN A STAIRCASE.
CAUTION, KAZOR.
EVEN AS HE ENTERED THE CHAMBER THOSE INSTINCTS SCREAMED DANGER.
I HAVE SUCCEEDED IN REACHING THE INNER SANCTUM, YET I AM PLAGUED BY FEELINGS OF DREAD. AMIDST THE INCENSE SMELLS WHICH PERVADE THIS PLACE THERE IS ANOTHER ODOUR. I KNOW IT SOMEHOW, BUT . . .

THEN KAZOR FACED THE GRIM, GOLDEN GOD ZOG-YEZID . . .
GREETINGS, UGLY ONE. TO ME YOU HAVE NO VALUE AS A GOD. BUT AS A LUMP OF GOLD, THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER, *HA! HA!*

KAZOR'S SMILE VANISHED AS HE STEPPED TO THE DOOR.
NO SOUNDS FROM THE OUTER CHAMBER, YET WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE GODS ARE THESE MARKS?
KAZOR'S SWORD WHISPERED FROM ITS SCABBARD AS HE MOVED BACK TO THE IDOL, HIS EYES PROBING THE INKY SHADOWS OF THE CHAMBER.
I LIKE NOT THIS PLACE ONE BIT. I'D BEST NOT LINGER HERE ANY LONGER THAN NECESSARY. FIRST, HOWEVER, ZOG NEEDS CUTTING DOWN TO SIZE FOR MY SACK.
YOUR SOFT GOLD LIMBS ARE NO MATCH FOR MY KEEN BLADE, ZOG!

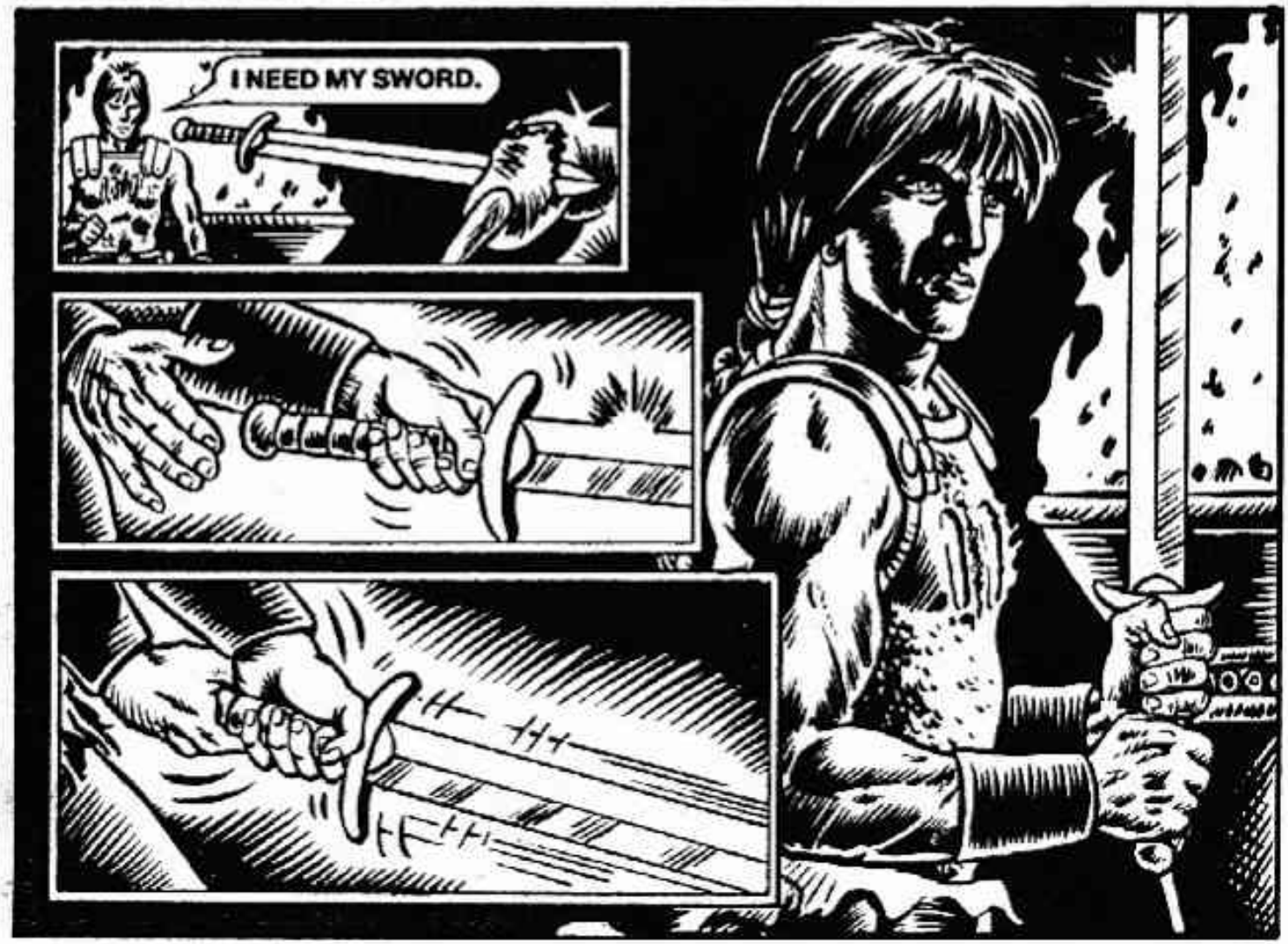
KAZOR STRUCK AGAIN AND AGAIN, GOLDLUST DULLING HIS SENSES SO THAT HE WAS UNAWARE OF A MOVEMENT IN THE SHADOWS WHERE DANGER STALKED . . .
THERE'S ENOUGH GOLD HERE TO BUY A KINGDOM. TIME I FILLED MY BAG.
BY THE GODS . . . OH MY . . .

THE GREAT BEAST HURLED ITSELF WITH AWESOME SPEED UPON THE STARTLED THIEF.
AAAAAAH!!
KAZOR'S CHAIN MAIL SAVED HIM —
IT'S POWERFUL — TOO POWERFUL . . .

AND AS THEY STRUGGLED THE COMBATANTS COLLIDED WITH ONE OF THE BRAZIERS —
KAZOR MOVED WITH DESPERATE SPEED.
HOT EMBERS SPILLING . . .

EVEN AS HE GAINED HIS FEET . . .
WHAT IN THE NAME OF —?
UH?
NO — ARGH!
FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS OF FELINE FURY ONCE AGAIN LAUNCHED ITSELF AT KAZOR.
THIS TRICK WORKED WHEN I WRESTLED FOR WAGERS.

PRIEST-GUARD AND THE CREATURE CRASHED INTO THE CHAMBER BEYOND, KAZOR LEAPED TO THE DOOR, AND —
DOUBTLESS THE PRIESTS HAVE A WAY OF CONTROLLING THEIR PET WHICH GUARDS THE IDOL, YET THEY'LL DO LITTLE TO ABATE ITS PRESENT FRENZY —


I NEED MY SWORD.

BUT —
KAZOR CUT THE ROPE BEHIND HIM —
CURSE MY GREED FOR GOLD. HERE'S WHERE I PAY FOR IT.
CURSE THE WEIGHT OF THIS GOLD.
OUR SACRED TEMPLE HAS BEEN DEFILED.
LOOK — THERE . . .
INN

AND —
BY THE — KAZOR! CAUGHT RED-HANDED AT LAST, I'LL WAGER.
NOT YET!

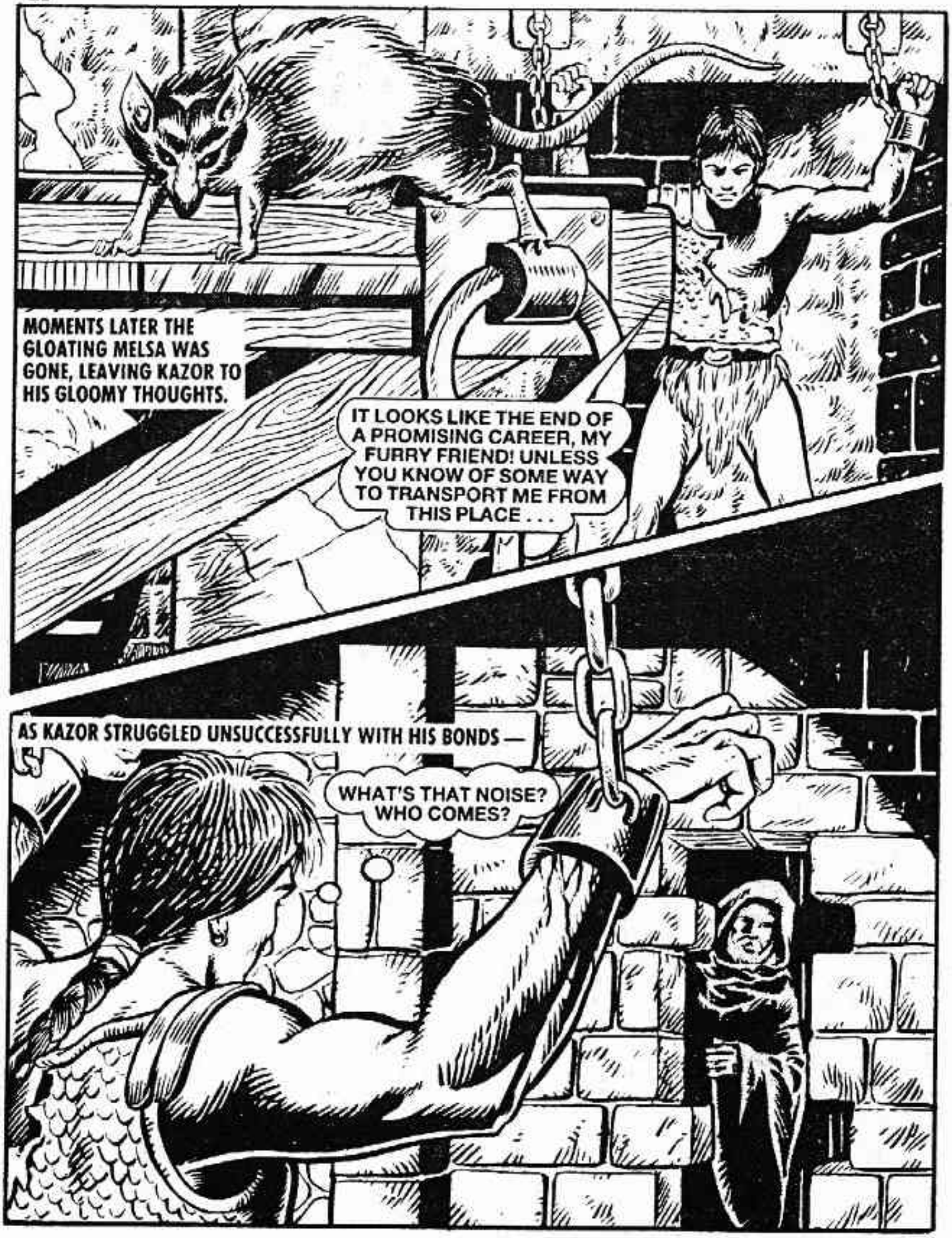
GOT TO REACH THE REAR ENTRANCE . . .
GET HIM!
WEAKENED BY THE NIGHT'S ADVENTURES, KAZOR WAS OVERWHELMED.

KAZOR WAS DRAGGED BEFORE KING MARRAKUS OF ZAMUZHAR . . .
HE HAS DEFILED OUR SACRED TEMPLE, MAJESTY. DISMEMBERED THE IDOL. I DEMAND —
QUITE SO, THAANU. IT WOULD SEEM THAT DEATH IS TOO GOOD FOR HIM.

TAKE HIM TO THE DEEPEST DUNGEON, THERE TO BE TORTURED AND MAIMED BEFORE I SHOW MERCY AND LET HIM DIE.

KAZOR WAS TAKEN TO THE DUNGEONS WHERE, CHAINED, HE FACED MELSA, CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S GUARD.
SO — THE MIGHTY KAZOR CAUGHT IN THE ACT AT LAST! I REGRET I WAS NOT THERE TO WITNESS THE EVENT!
AH, MELSA . . . WHAT A DISTINCTLY UNPLEASANT TASK IT IS FOR ME TO BE IN YOUR COMPANY.

I SHOULD SLIT YOUR TONGUE! YOU HAVE LEAD MY GUARDS A MERRY DANCE SINCE YOU CAME TO ZAMUZHAR — NOW YOU SUFFER. FEEL MY KNIFE!
I'VE SHAVED TODAY, THANKS.


MOMENTS LATER THE GLOATING MELSA WAS GONE, LEAVING KAZOR TO HIS GLOOMY THOUGHTS.
IT LOOKS LIKE THE END OF A PROMISING CAREER, MY FURRY FRIEND! UNLESS YOU KNOW OF SOME WAY TO TRANSPORT ME FROM THIS PLACE . . .
AS KAZOR STRUGGLED UNSUCCESSFULLY WITH HIS BONDS —
WHAT'S THAT NOISE? WHO COMES?

THE DARK FIGURE APPROACHED, BEJEWELLED FINGERS PULLING BACK THE CONCEALING COWL.
KING MARRAKUS?
YES, KAZOR!

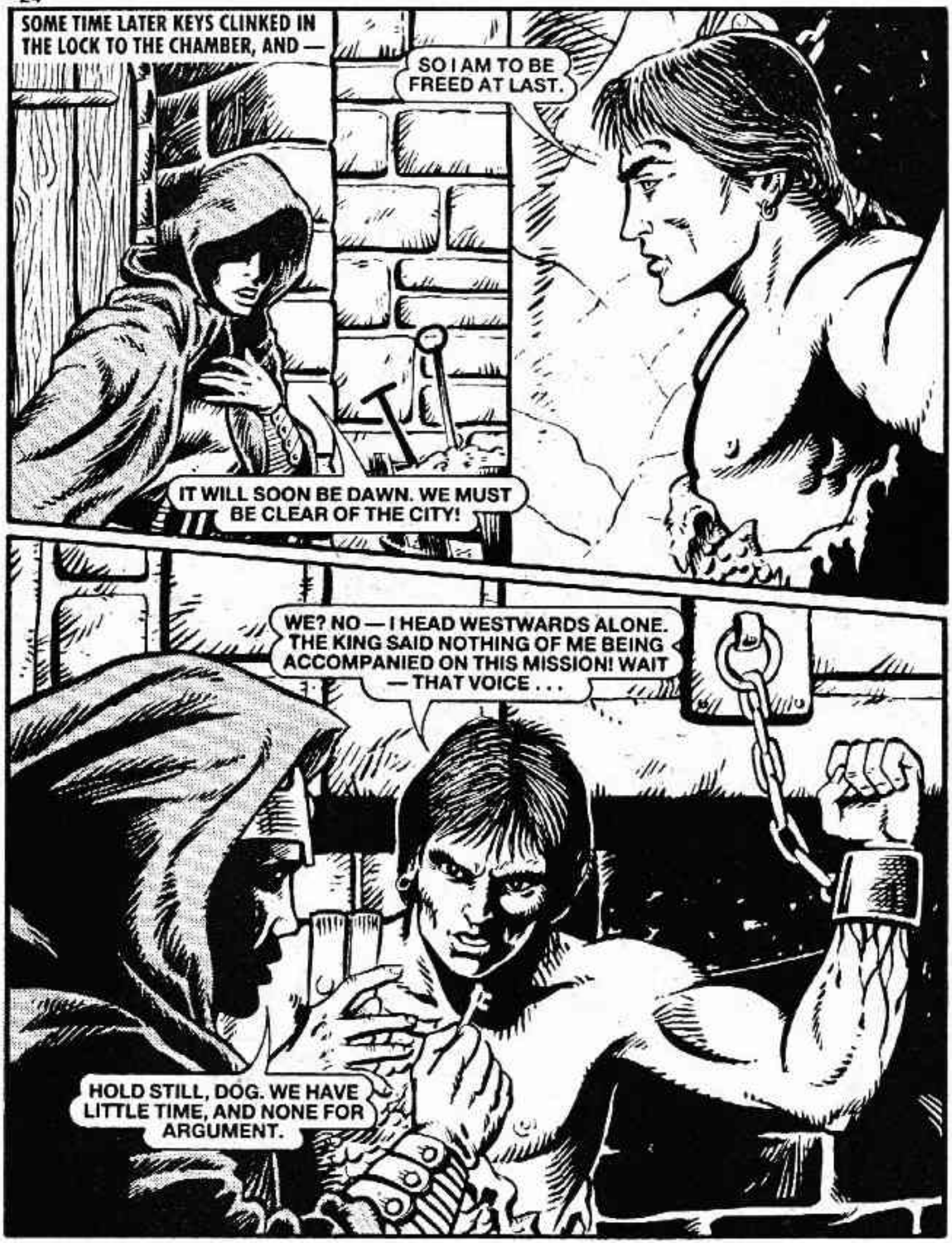
I HAVE NEED OF SOMEONE WITH YOUR UNDOUBTED TALENTS, LOW AS THEY ARE. EVIL THREATENS NYGRA, AND IT HAS ITS HOME IN THE FAR WESTERN REACHES. I CAN TRUST NO ONE.

THERE IS RISING UNREST IN THE BARBARIAN TRIBES. THEY HAVE CEASED FEUDING AMONGST THEMSELVES AND HAVE FOUND A WAY THROUGH THE STYGUS SWAMPS TO RAID AND MASSACRE NYGRAN VILLAGES.
I BELIEVE MAGIC IS AT WORK, BINDING THE WARRING TRIBES TOGETHER TO THREATEN NYGRA. A SHAMAN WIELDS A STRANGE INFLUENCE OVER THEM. THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER IS A UNIQUE TALISMAN — SOME SAY THE RELIC OF A BYGONE AGE . . .

UNITS OF MY BEST MEN HAVE BEEN SENT ACROSS THE BORDER TO CRUSH THIS THREAT. YET IT WAS AS IF THE SWAMP SWALLOWED THEM UP — THEY NEVER RETURNED. IT IS TIME FOR A NEW STRATEGY. I WANT YOU TO CLAIM THE TALISMAN.
STEAL IT, YOU MEAN.

KAZOR'S IRONIC LAUGH WAS CUT SHORT BY THE SOUND OF GUARDS APPROACHING.
THERE IS A SLIM CHANCE I COULD SURVIVE YOUR TASK, KING MARRAKUS, YET NONE THAT I WOULD ESCAPE YOUR EXECUTIONER, IT SEEMS. I ACCEPT THE MISSION — FREE ME!
NOT NOW! SOMEONE WILL COME. I MUST DEPART BEFORE I AM DISCOVERED.

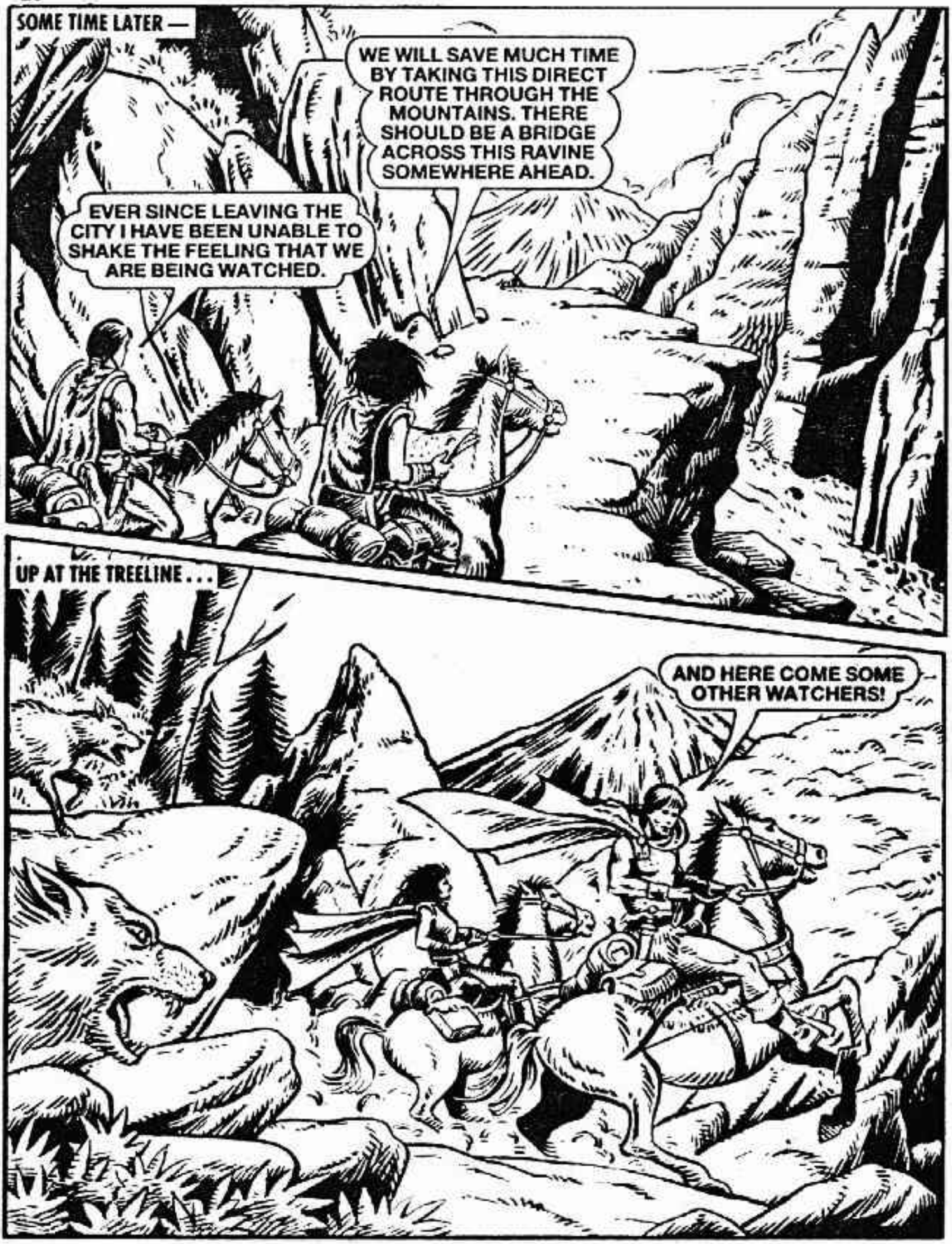
SECONDS LATER THE KING HAD CREPT BACK THROUGH THE OPENING AND WAS GONE . . .
THE PRISONER LOOKS THOUGHTFUL.
NO DOUBT CONTEMPLATING THE TORTURES THAT TOMORROW WILL BRING. I HEAR CAPTAIN MELSA IS SUPERVISING MATTERS HERSELF.
I AM TO FACE A POWERFUL SHAMAN — A BARBARIAN WIZARD. WHAT DARK ABOMINATIONS CAN HE CONJURE AGAINST ME? YET ALL I WILL HAVE ARE A BLADE, AND MY WITS. IT'S HOPELESS . . .

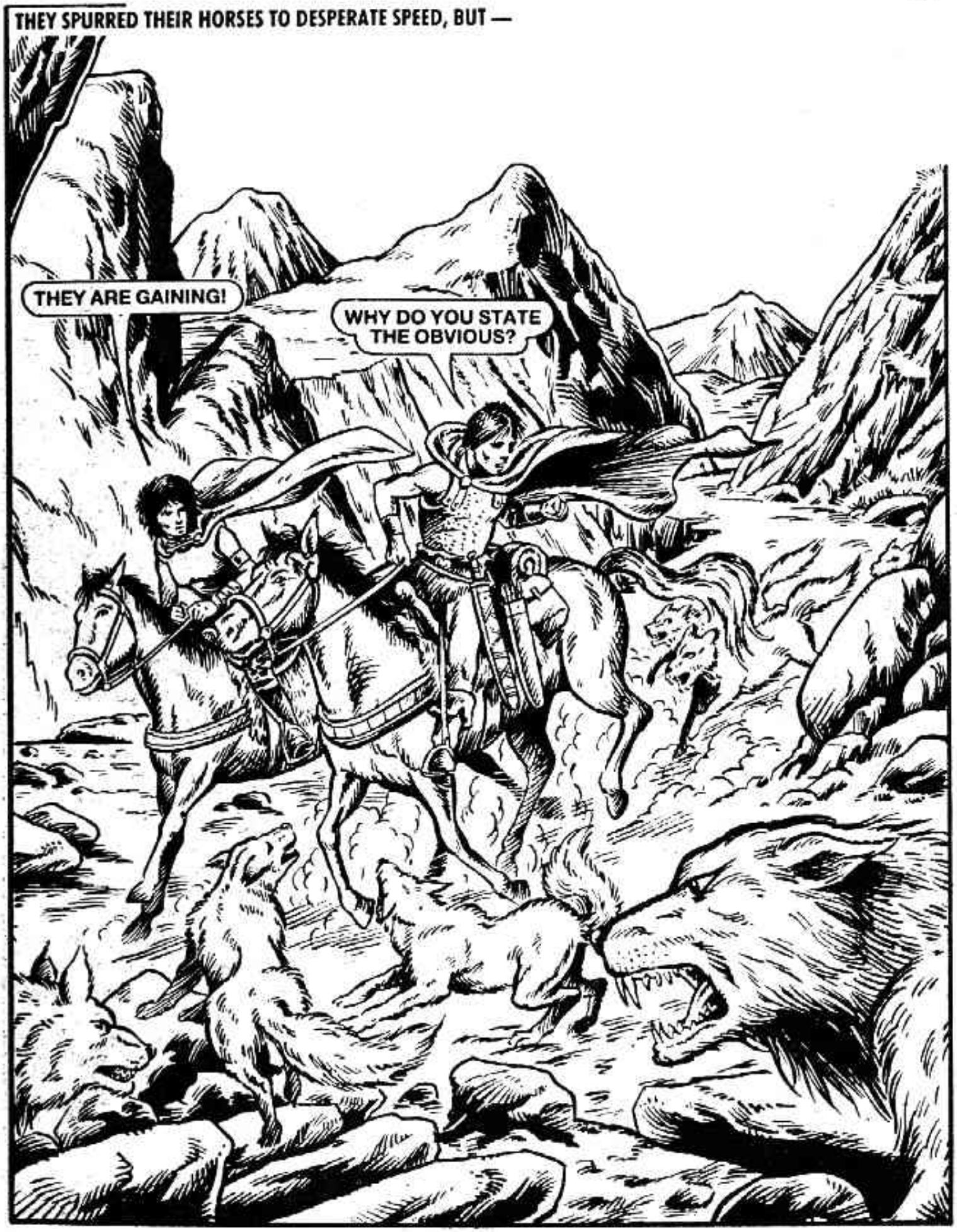

SOME TIME LATER KEYS CLINKED IN THE LOCK TO THE CHAMBER, AND —
SO I AM TO BE FREED AT LAST.
IT WILL SOON BE DAWN. WE MUST BE CLEAR OF THE CITY!
WE? NO — I HEAD WESTWARDS ALONE. THE KING SAID NOTHING OF ME BEING ACCOMPANIED ON THIS MISSION! WAIT — THAT VOICE . . .
HOLD STILL, DOG. WE HAVE LITTLE TIME, AND NONE FOR ARGUMENT.

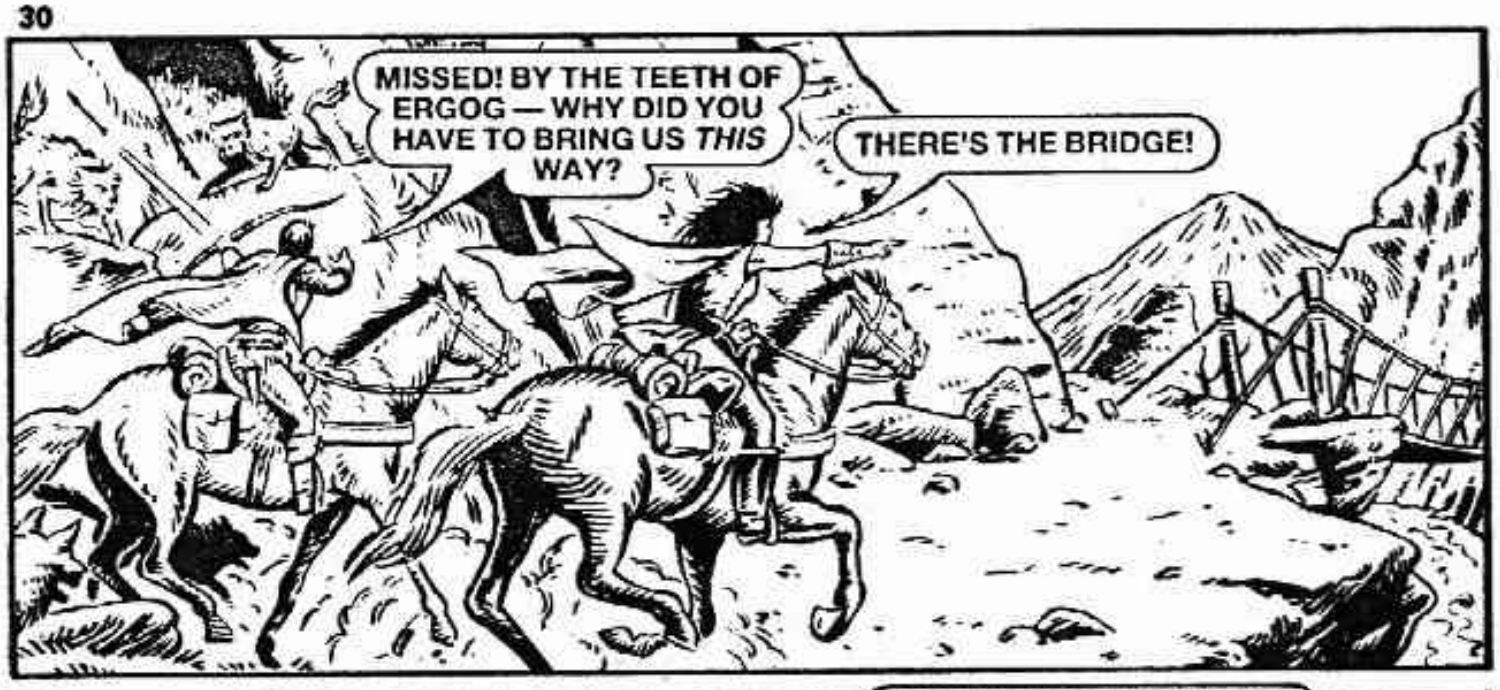
YOU! MELSA! MY PARTNER ON THIS MISSION . . .?
YES! DON'T EXPECT ME TO LIKE IT ANY MORE THAN YOU DO. THE KING IGNORED MY PROTESTS.
I HAD HOPED TO SEE YOU SUFFER GREATLY THIS COMING DAY. INSTEAD, AT THE EXPRESS ORDERS OF THE KING I MUST RESCUE YOUR WRETCHED CARCASS.
DRUGGED WINE. THIS PAIR WILL SLEEP FOR HOURS.

AND, MOMENTS LATER —
NO ONE MUST SUSPECT YOU HAVE ESCAPED TO DO THE KING'S WORK. THERE IS TREACHERY AFOOT EVEN IN HIS INNER COURT. WHY HE CHOSE YOU I CANNOT IMAGINE.
WHY HE CHOSE YOU, I CANNOT IMAGINE!
YOU'RE MOST LIKELY TO VANISH RATHER THAN HELP THE KING, I'LL WARRANT. BETRAY HIM AND AND I WILL HAVE MUCH PLEASURE IN KILLING YOU, KAZOR.
I HAVE NEVER BETRAYED ANYONE . . . NOT EVEN A LOUD-MOUTHED WOMAN.

YET EVEN AS THEY HEADED TOWARDS THE WEST.
THAT OLD FOOL MARRAKUS CANNOT GUESS THE REAL POWER OF THE SKELDOR TALISMAN. YET IT IS WRITTEN IN THE ANCIENT SCROLLS STORED IN THE BOWELS OF THE TEMPLE OF ZOG-YEZID THAT THE TALISMAN WILL AWAKEN OUR SLUMBERING GOD TO HOLD NYGRA IN HIS TALONS . . .
THAANU, THE HEAD PRIEST, THIRSTED FOR POWER, AND IN HIS EVIL TOWER IN ZAMUZHAR—
THUS I WILL SEE TO IT THAT KAZOR INDEED SECURES THE OBJECT OF HIS MISSION. I WILL USE ALL THE SORCEROUS DEVICES AT MY COMMAND TO AID HIS QUEST, YET WHEN HE RETURNS TO ZAMUZHAR HE WILL DELIVER THE TALISMAN TO ME!


SOME TIME LATER —
WE WILL SAVE MUCH TIME BY TAKING THIS DIRECT ROUTE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS. THERE SHOULD BE A BRIDGE ACROSS THIS RAVINE SOMEWHERE AHEAD.
EVER SINCE LEAVING THE CITY I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SHAKE THE FEELING THAT WE ARE BEING WATCHED.
UP AT THE TREELINE . . .
AND HERE COME SOME OTHER WATCHERS!


THEY SPURRED THEIR HORSES TO DESPERATE SPEED, BUT —
THEY ARE GAINING!
WHY DO YOU STATE THE OBVIOUS?


MISSED! BY THE TEETH OF ERGOG — WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BRING US *THIS* WAY?
THERE'S THE BRIDGE!

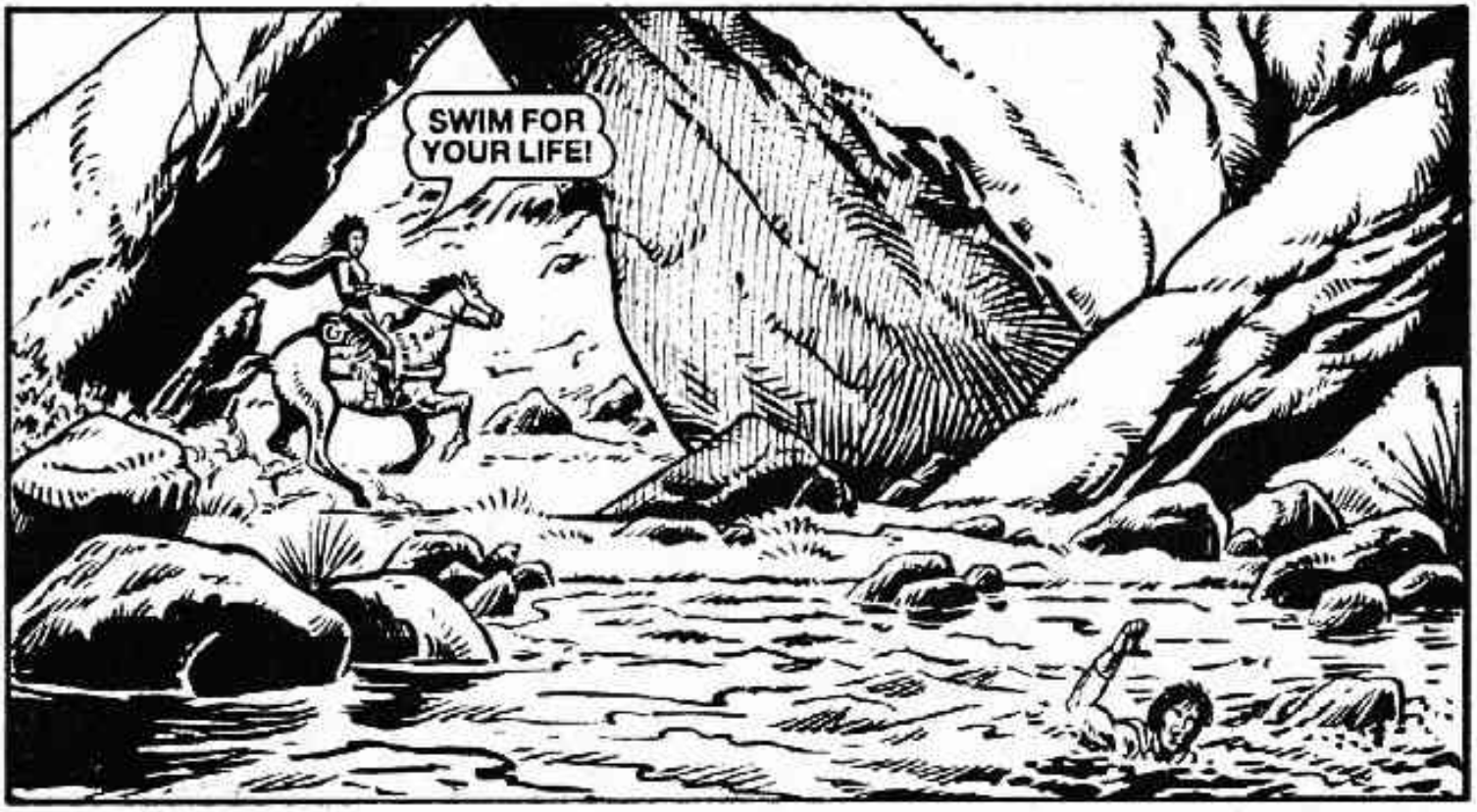
SECONDS LATER —
GET THE HORSES ACROSS WHILST I HOLD THEM OFF. HURRY!
NO! I STAY AND FIGHT. I TAKE NO ORDERS FROM YOU, THIEF!

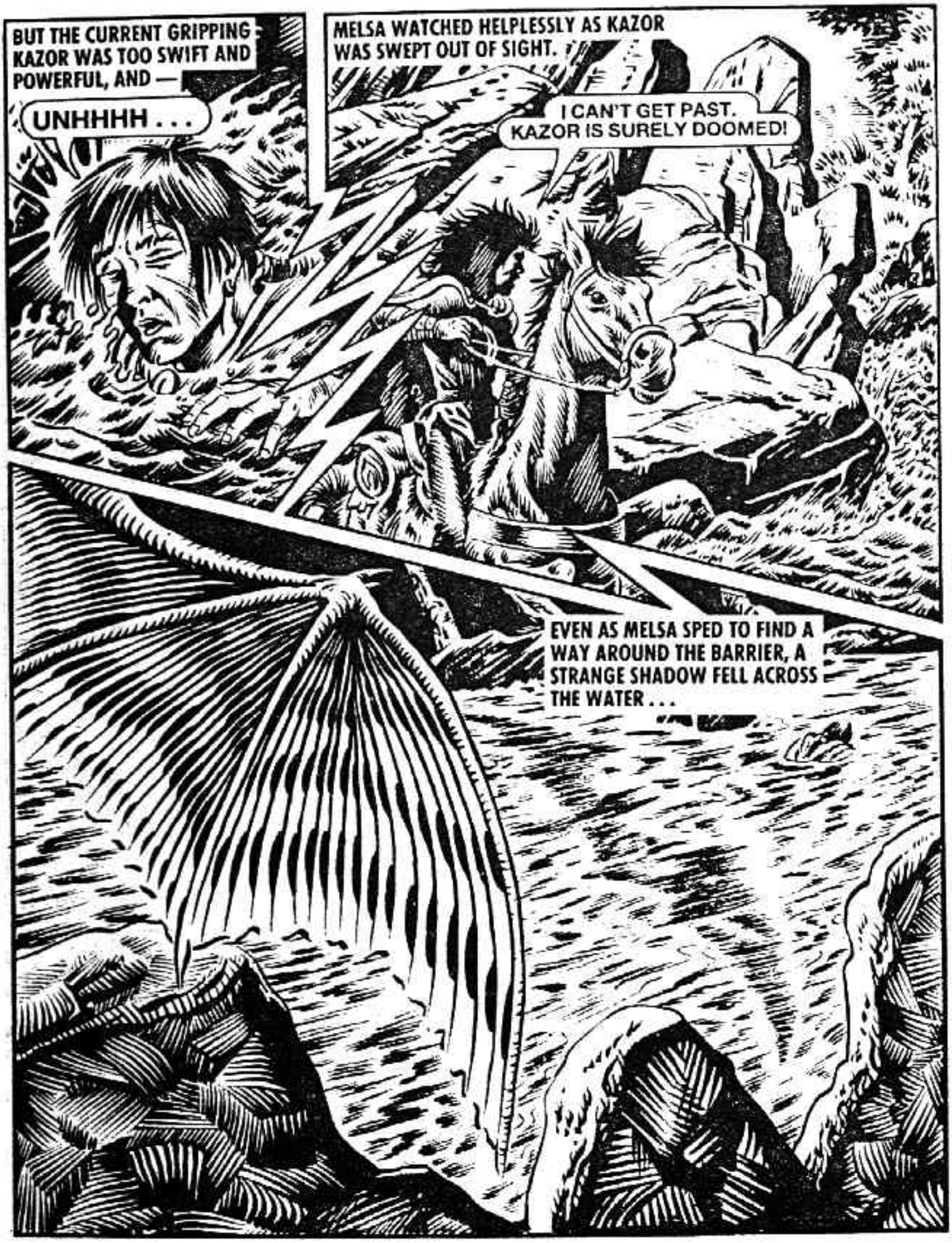
BACK! READY YOUR BLADE!
THE HORSES ARE PANICKING. THEY'LL TIP US ALL OFF THE BRIDGE.

EVEN AS MELSA GRABBED THE REINS OF THE FEAR-CRAZED HORSES, THE WOLVES WERE UPON THEM.
CHEW ON THIS!
KAZOR WAS HURLED BACK BY THE FORCE OF THE LEAPING WOLF.
KAZOR . . .

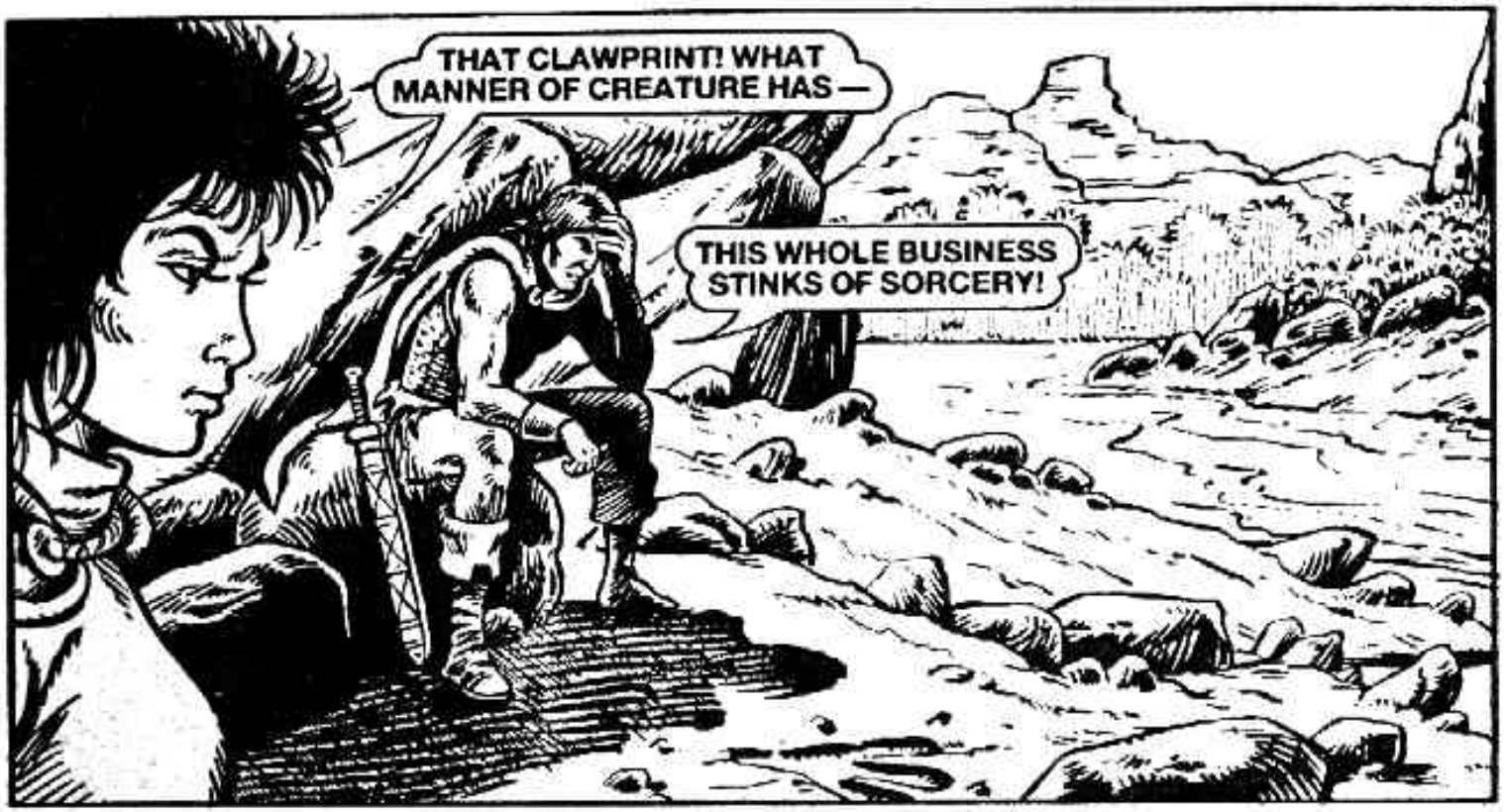
GRIEF — THAT WAS CLOSE!

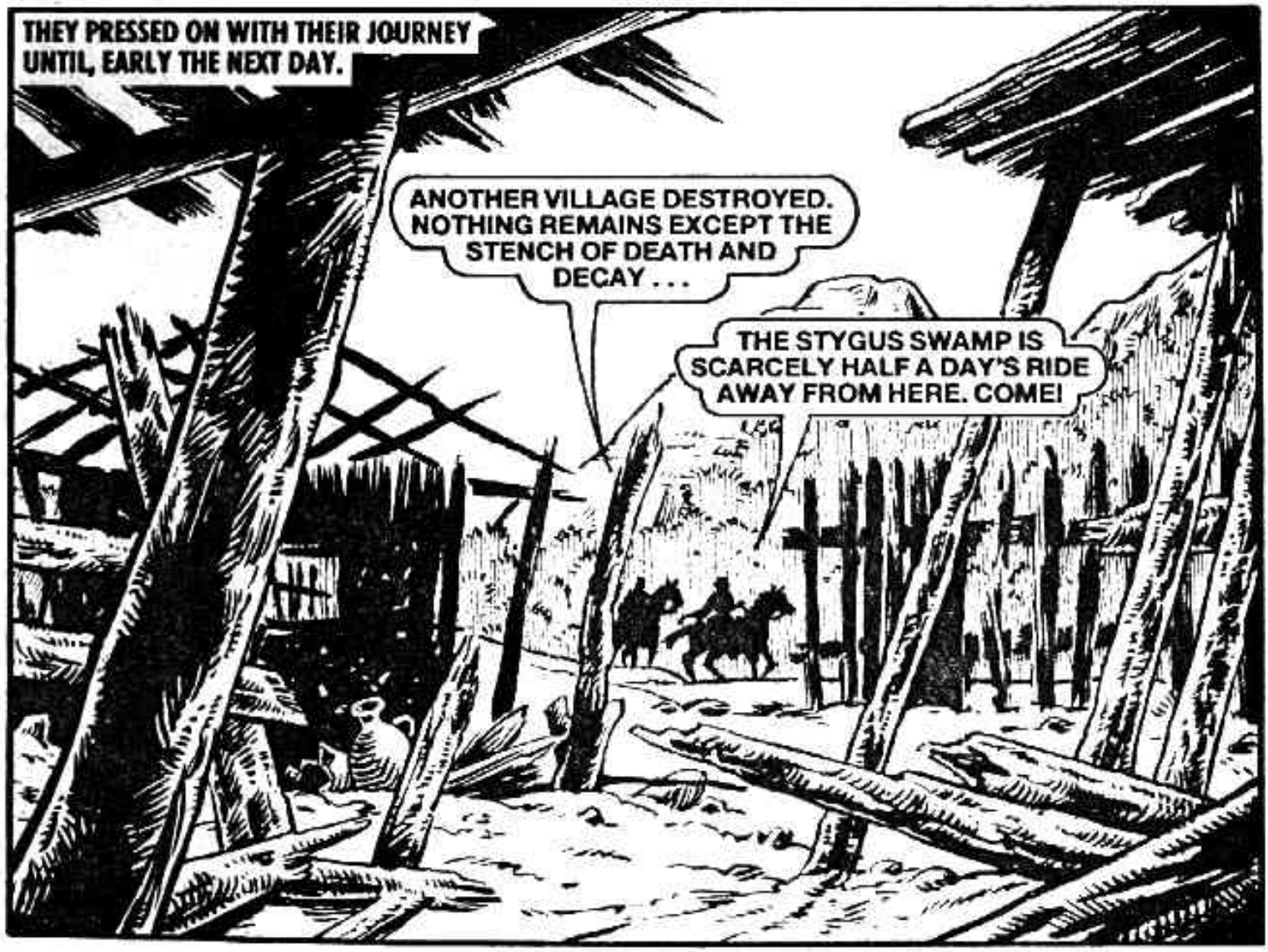
ALTHOUGH UNINJURED BY THE FALL, KAZOR WAS FAR FROM SAFE.
CURRENT — TOO STRONG . . .


SWIM FOR YOUR LIFE!

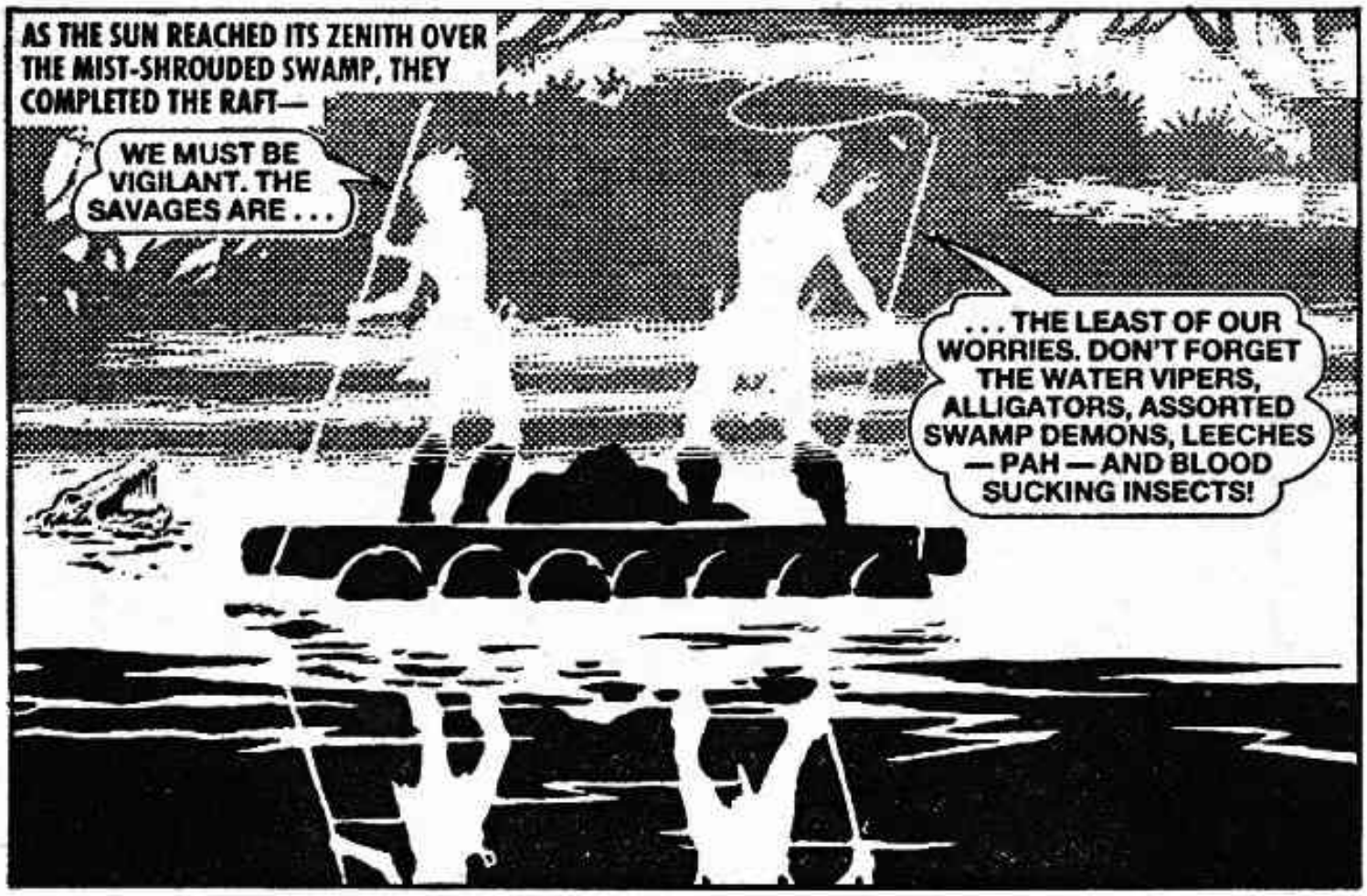

BUT THE CURRENT GRIPPING KAZOR WAS TOO SWIFT AND POWERFUL, AND —
UNHHHH . . .
MELSA WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS KAZOR WAS SWEPT OUT OF SIGHT.
I CAN'T GET PAST. KAZOR IS SURELY DOOMED!
EVEN AS MELSA SPED TO FIND A WAY AROUND THE BARRIER, A STRANGE SHADOW FELL ACROSS THE WATER . . .

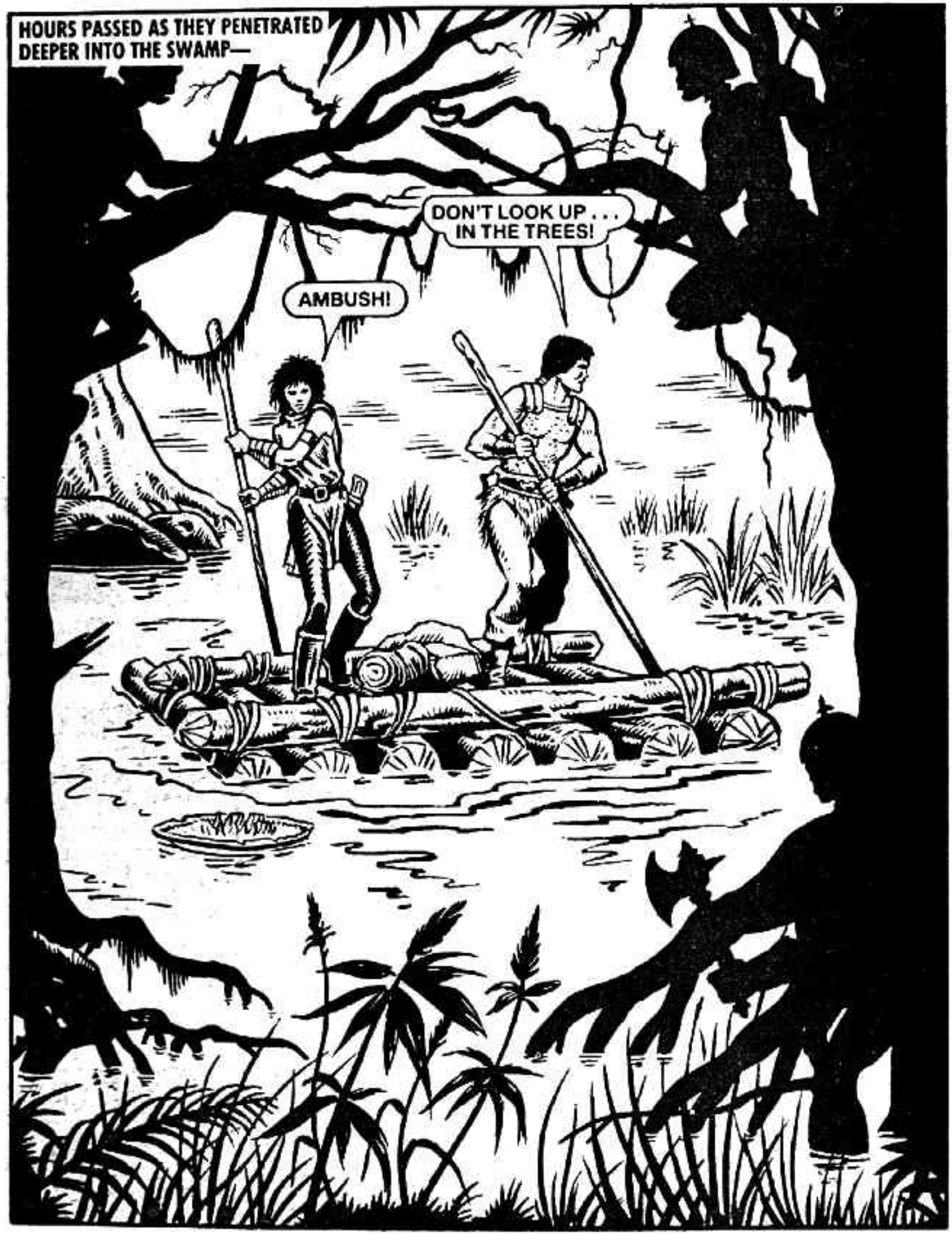
AND, WITH THE RUSTLE OF POWERFUL WINGS, KAZOR WAS HAULED OUT OF THE GRIP OF THE WATER.
LATER, MELSA FOUND HER COMPANION, AND A MYSTERY . . .
KAZOR! YOU'RE SAFE!


THAT CLAWPRINT! WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE HAS—
THIS WHOLE BUSINESS STINKS OF SORCERY!


THEY PRESSED ON WITH THEIR JOURNEY UNTIL, EARLY THE NEXT DAY.
ANOTHER VILLAGE DESTROYED. NOTHING REMAINS EXCEPT THE STENCH OF DEATH AND DECAY . . .
THE STYGUS SWAMP IS SCARCELY HALF A DAY'S RIDE AWAY FROM HERE. COME!

FINALLY THE FORMIDABLE STYGUS SWAMP LAY BEFORE THEM . . .
THE SWAMP HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BARRIER KEEPING THE SAVAGES OUT OF NYGRA — UNTIL NOW . . .
IF THE SAVAGES CAN CROSS IT IN SAFETY THEN SO SHALL WE. BUT WHAT FACES US BEYOND IT I DREAD TO THINK!


AS THE SUN REACHED ITS ZENITH OVER THE MIST-SHROUDED SWAMP, THEY COMPLETED THE RAFT—
WE MUST BE VIGILANT. THE SAVAGES ARE . . .
. . . THE LEAST OF OUR WORRIES. DON'T FORGET THE WATER VIPERS, ALLIGATORS, ASSORTED SWAMP DEMONS, LEECHES — PAH — AND BLOOD SUCKING INSECTS!


HOURS PASSED AS THEY PENETRATED DEEPER INTO THE SWAMP—
DON'T LOOK UP . . . IN THE TREES!
AMBUSH!

AS THE RAFT DRIFTED CLOSER—
IT'S NOT AN AMBUSH! IT'S THE KING'S TROOPS! CAPTURED THEN STRUNG UP IN THAT TREE!
LEFT TO THE MERCY OF THE CREATURES OF THE SWAMP. POOR DEVILS. JUST PRAY THAT WE DON'T SHARE THE SAME FATE.

MOMENTS LATER—
WE MUST FIND SHELTER ALOFT OUT OF REACH, AND REST AS BEST WE CAN.
THAT WON'T BE EASY IN THIS ACCURSED PLACE. I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY THE STYGUS SWAMP HAS BEEN NYGRA'S BEST DEFENCE FOR SO LONG!

AFTER THEY ATE THEIR MEAGRE SUPPLIES . . .
TRY TO SLEEP. I WILL TAKE THE FIRST WATCH.
AND RISK YOU DOZING OFF WITH TREE SNAKES AND LEATHERWINGS ABROAD? NEVER! *YOU* LACK THE DISCIPLINE OF A TRAINED SOLDIER, *THIEF!*

THIEF . . . SOLDIER . . . WHAT DOES IT MATTER? WE ARE EQUALS AGAINST THE FOUL SORCERY WE WILL FACE.

NEXT MORNING THEY RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY AND, AFTER SEVERAL HOURS—
THE MAP IS USELESS. FOR ALL I KNOW WE COULD BE FLOATING IN CIRCLES . . .

MOMENTS LATER—
KAZOR — I THOUGHT I SAW . . .
DON'T BOTHER ASKING ME . . . I'M ONLY A THIEF.

THEY HACKED THROUGH UNDERGROWTH HARDLY UTTERING A WORD, UNTIL . . .
A TRAIL, AND SOMEONE OR SOMETHING IS COMING OUR WAY WITH UNDUE HASTE. OFF THE TRAIL — QUICKLY!
NO! READY YOUR BLADE! WE'LL STAND AND FIGHT.
SUDDENLY—
WHAT THE . . .?

THE STRANGE WARRIOR STUMBLED—
WHAAAARGH!
IT'S AN OLD MAN — A SHAMAN BY HIS GARB. THE FALL KNOCKED HIM OUT . . .
THERE ARE MORE COMING BY THE SOUND OF IT.

SECONDS LATER—
THEY DIDN'T EXPECT TO FIND *US* HERE!
IT WON'T STOP THEM KILLING US! PUT THAT BLADE TO WORK.

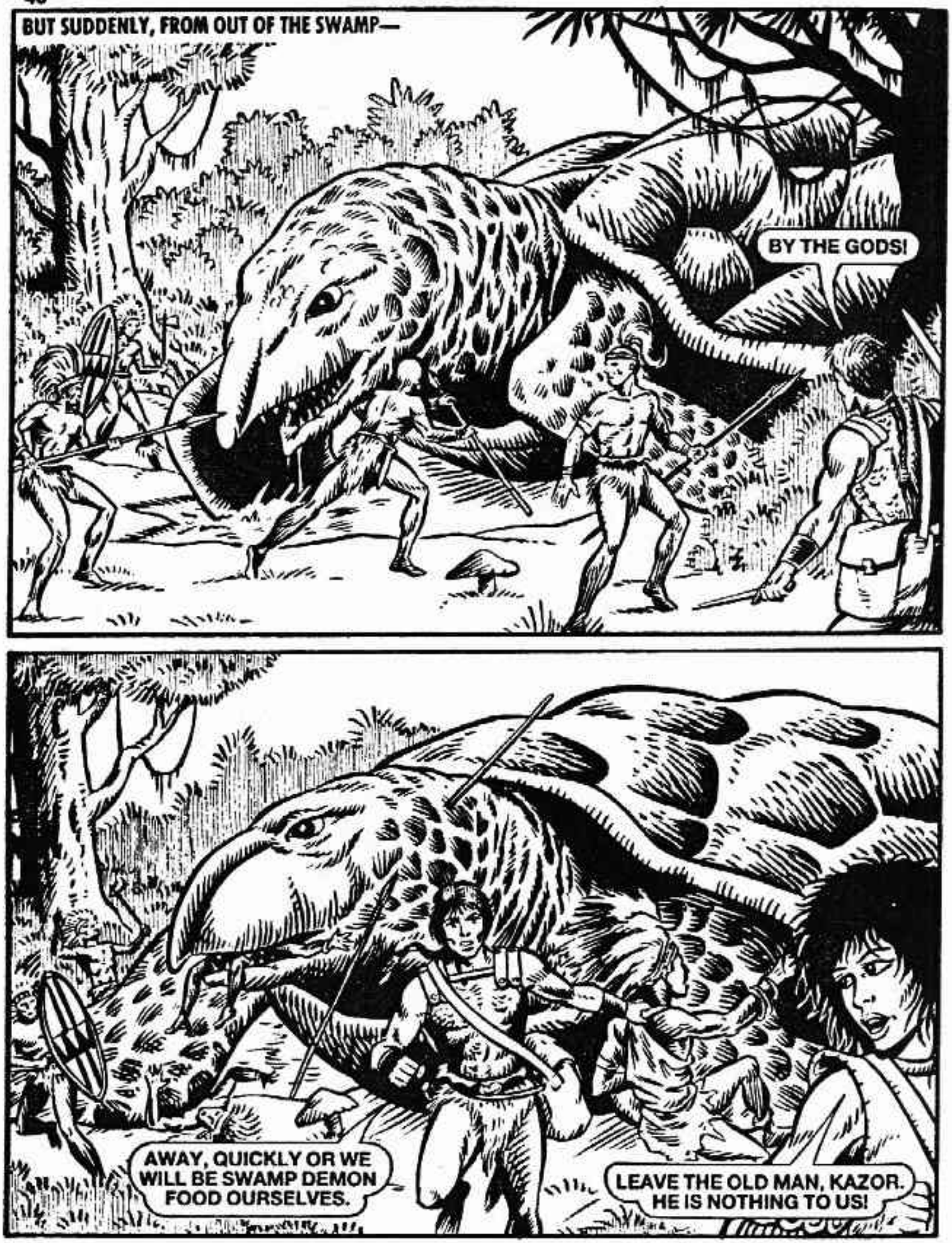
SOMETHING TELLS ME THEY WERE HUNTING THAT SMELLY OLD MAN.
NOW WE'RE THE PREY!

BLADES WHISPERED THROUGH THE AIR IN EXPERT HANDS—
YOU HAVE BITTEN OFF MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW WITH US. PAINTED ONES!

WE TRIUMPH, KAZOR.
DON'T COUNT ON IT. WE MUST GET OUT OF HERE.

WHO . . . WHO ARE YOU?
THE MAN WHO SEEMS TO HAVE SAVED YOUR STINKING HIDE, OLD MAN, THOUGH I KNOW NOT WHY.
KAZOR . . .

THE SHAMAN LEAPED TO HIS FEET—
BACK, DOGS OR PERISH BY MUTAI'S MAGIC!
YOUR SO CALLED MAGIC IS A JOKE, MUTAI, AND WE WILL LAUGH AT IT AS *YOU* DIE!


BUT SUDDENLY, FROM OUT OF THE SWAMP—
BY THE GODS!
AWAY, QUICKLY OR WE WILL BE SWAMP DEMON FOOD OURSELVES.
LEAVE THE OLD MAN, KAZOR. HE IS NOTHING TO US!

BUT KAZOR DRAGGED THE OLD MAN ALONG—
THERE IS NO SIGN OF PURSUIT. WE'RE CLEAR—
GUARD AGAINST SUCH RECKLESS THOUGHTS, STRANGER. MY PEOPLE, THE SEVATIM, ARE EXPERT TRACKERS. THEY WILL SNIFF OUT YOUR TRAIL SOON ENOUGH. LUCKILY, YOU NOW HAVE ME TO HELP YOU.

I SENSE YOU RISK THE PERILS OF THIS LAND FOR SOME PURPOSE. BUT NOW *MY* FATE IS LINKED WITH YOURS AND THAT OF THE TALISMAN KNOWN AS THE EYE OF DOOM. THUS I WILL GUIDE YOU TO YOUR DESTINATION AND AID YOU!
YOU KNOW OF OUR MISSION? BUT HOW?

MAGIC, MY FRIEND. I AM A *SHAMAN*, REMEMBER? FOLLOW ME . . .

SOME TIME LATER—
IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY? MY FEET ARE NUMB WITH COLD.
YOUR BODY WILL BE NUMB WITH DEATH IF THE SEVATIM TRACK YOU DOWN. THIS WAY WE DON'T LEAVE A TRAIL. CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB THE ROCKS. BE QUIET, AND WARY . . .

THEIR CAUTION WAS WELL-FOUNDED, FOR—
YOU SAID THE SEVATIM WERE YOUR PEOPLE, MUTAI. SO WHY DO THEY HUNT YOU?
I WAS ONCE THEIR SHAMAN . . . HEALER . . . WIZARD. A MAN CAN HAVE SO MANY NAMES. I WAS RESPECTED, VALUED, UNTIL THE COMING OF ZAGOOR . . . THE PRINCE OF FEAR!

ZAGOOR — A SHAMAN VERSED IN THE BLACK ARTS. THE SEVATIM — ALL THE TRIBES ARE HIS. MY OWN SKILLS COULD NOT BREAK THE SPELL HE HAS CAST OVER THEIR MINDS, AND AS I TRIED TO OPPOSE HIM HE ORDERED MY DEATH. I ESCAPED AND NOW I WISH TO KILL HIM!

SOON THEY MOVED ON, AND, DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS . . .
BEHOLD, THE PRINCE OF FEAR'S TEMPLE . . . AND THE EYE OF DOOM!

TEMPLE . . .? FORTRESS WOULD BE A BETTER NAME FOR IT. GETTING PAST THOSE GUARDS WILL BE TRICKY . . .
THAT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY. THE PRINCE HAS MADE HIS SANCTUM IN THE SYSTEM OF CAVES WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN. I KNOW THEM WELL . . .

MUTAI LED THEM TO ANOTHER PART OF THE MOUNTAIN—
THE PRINCE HAS USED THE AWESOME POWER OF THE EYE OF DOOM TO BUILD HIS ENTRANCE TO THE CAVERNS. YET THERE ARE OTHER OPENINGS. LOOK!
THEY SQUEEZED THROUGH INTO A TUNNEL.
I SUSPECT HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE SERVE THE PRINCE WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN. THUS AN AIRFLOW TO THE DEPTHS IS NEEDED, THROUGH PASSAGES SUCH AS THIS.
I DON'T LIKE IT. WHY HAVE A GUARDED MAIN ENTRANCE YET LEAVE THE BACK DOOR OPEN?
THEY CREPT FORWARD, AND AS THEIR EYES ADJUSTED TO THE GLOOM . . .
THERE'S THE ANSWER TO YOUR RIDDLE, KAZOR.
DOWN THE PASSAGE QUICKLY!

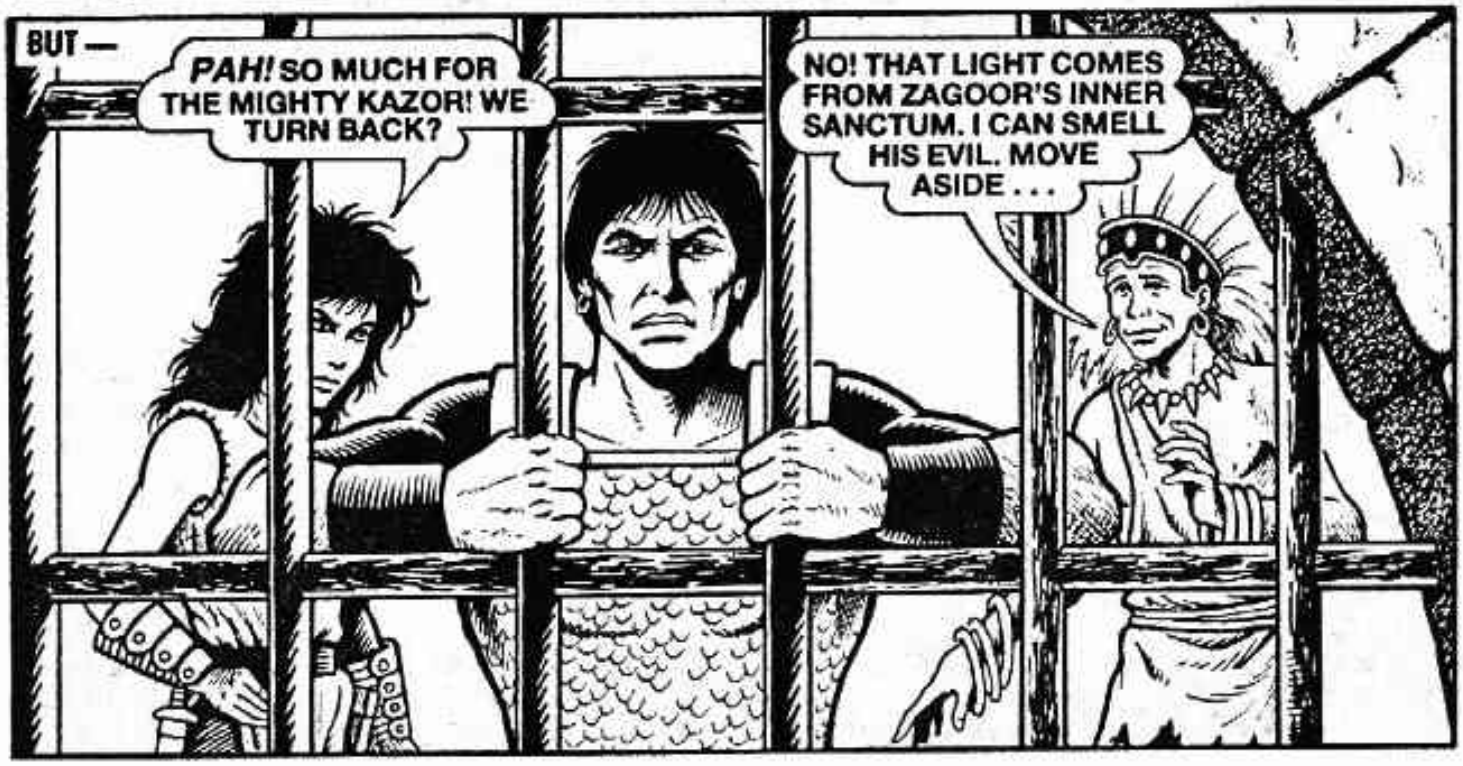
BUT THE MYSTERIOUS GUARDIANS MOVED—
WE'RE CUT OFF!
DO SOMETHING, MUTA!! YOU'VE BROUGHT US IN HERE TO OUR DEATHS!

EVEN AS THE CREATURES MOVED IN FOR THE KILL A CURIOUS NOISE FILLED THE AIR . . .
THE BLOOD OF THESE BRUTES ROTS STEEL. WE ARE DOOMED!
BY THE GODS — THIS IS NO TIME FOR CHANTING, OLD MAN. WHERE IS YOUR WIZARDRY?

BUT MUTA! HAD OTHER IDEAS . . .
THE CREATURES ARE RETREATING!
THAT LIGHT . . . IT'S BLINDING!

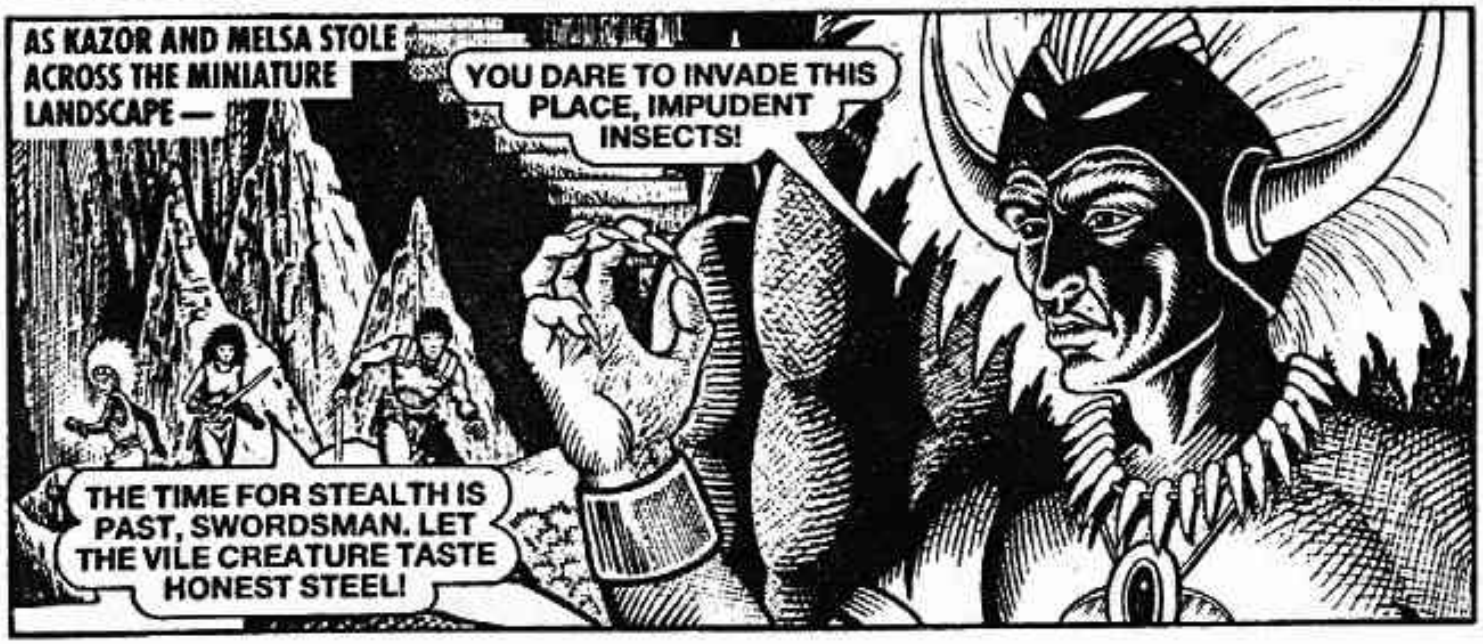
THEIRS IS A DOMAIN OF DARKNESS. THEY FEAR THE LIGHT MORE THAN ANY BLADE YOU WIELD!
OUT... QUICKLY! DOWN THAT TUNNEL!

MOMENTS LATER —
BY THE GODS! TO GET SO NEAR TO BE HALTED NOW! YET BARS DO NOT STOP ME, KAZOR FOR LONG!
SO THE MERCHANTS OF ZAMUZHAR HAVE FOUND TO THEIR COST, THIEF!


BUT —
PAH! SO MUCH FOR THE MIGHTY KAZOR! WE TURN BACK?
NO! THAT LIGHT COMES FROM ZAGOOR'S INNER SANCTUM. I CAN SMELL HIS EVIL. MOVE ASIDE...

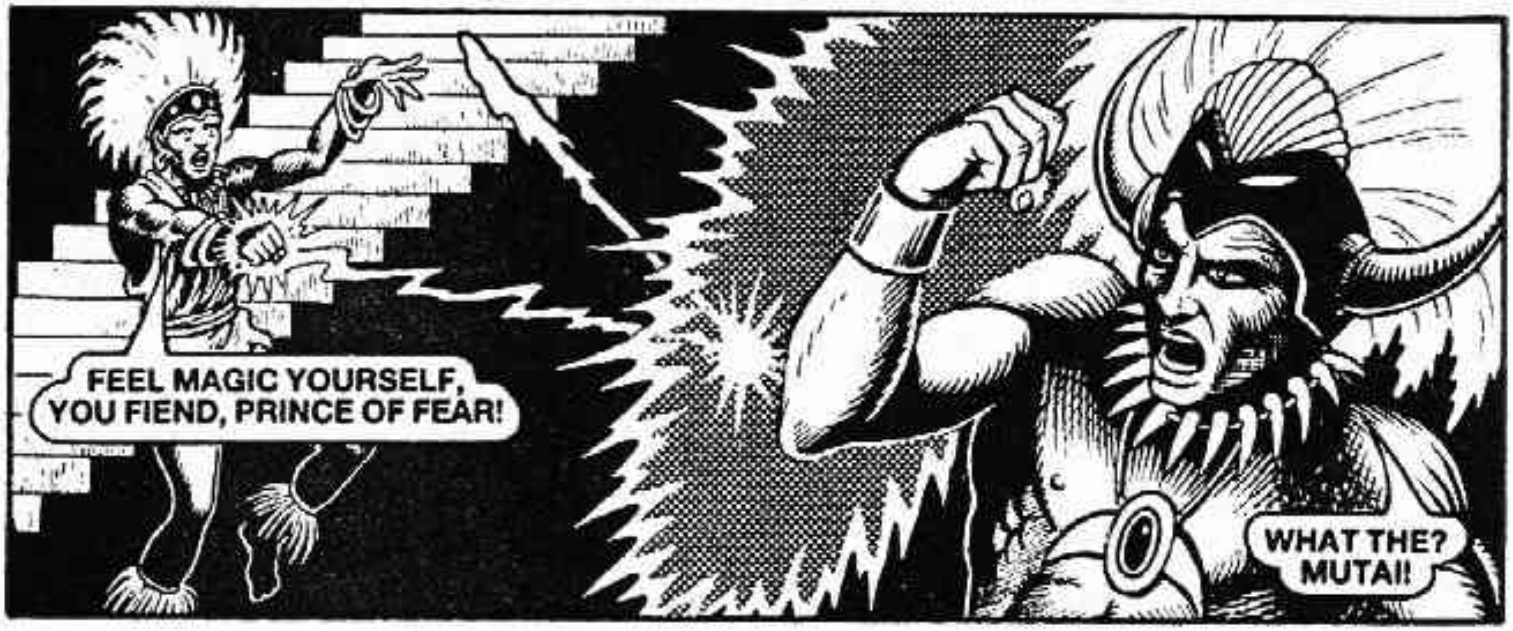
WHAT BRUTE FORCE CANNOT ACHIEVE CAN OFTEN BE ACCOMPLISHED BY MORE SUBTLE MEANS . . .
OUCH! THE METAL IS HOT. YOU ARE BEGINNING TO IMPRESS ME, SHAMAN!
FAR, FAR AWAY —
SO, THAT OLD FOOL IS PRIVY TO SOME MINOR MYSTERIES AFTER ALL. FINE. UNWITTINGLY HE AIDS ME. THEY ARE NEAR TO ZAGOOR, THUS I MUST WITHDRAW FOR HE MUST NOT SUSPECT MY HAND IN THIS SHOULD THEY BE DEFEATED. THEY FACE HIM ALONE . . .

AND SO —
THE PRINCE OF FEAR — AND AT HIS FEET OUR LAND WHICH HE INTENDS TO RULE WITH HIS VILE SORCERY.
NOT WITHOUT THE TALISMAN. LET'S TAKE HIM NOW WHILST HE IS ALONE!
NO — WAIT . . .


AS KAZOR AND MELSA STOLE ACROSS THE MINIATURE LANDSCAPE —
YOU DARE TO INVADE THIS PLACE, IMPUDENT INSECTS!
THE TIME FOR STEALTH IS PAST, SWORDSMAN. LET THE VILE CREATURE TASTE HONEST STEEL!

NO, VERMIN. YOU FEEL THE POWER OF MAGIC!
ARGH —!
I . . . I'M SINKING — THE SWAMP . . .

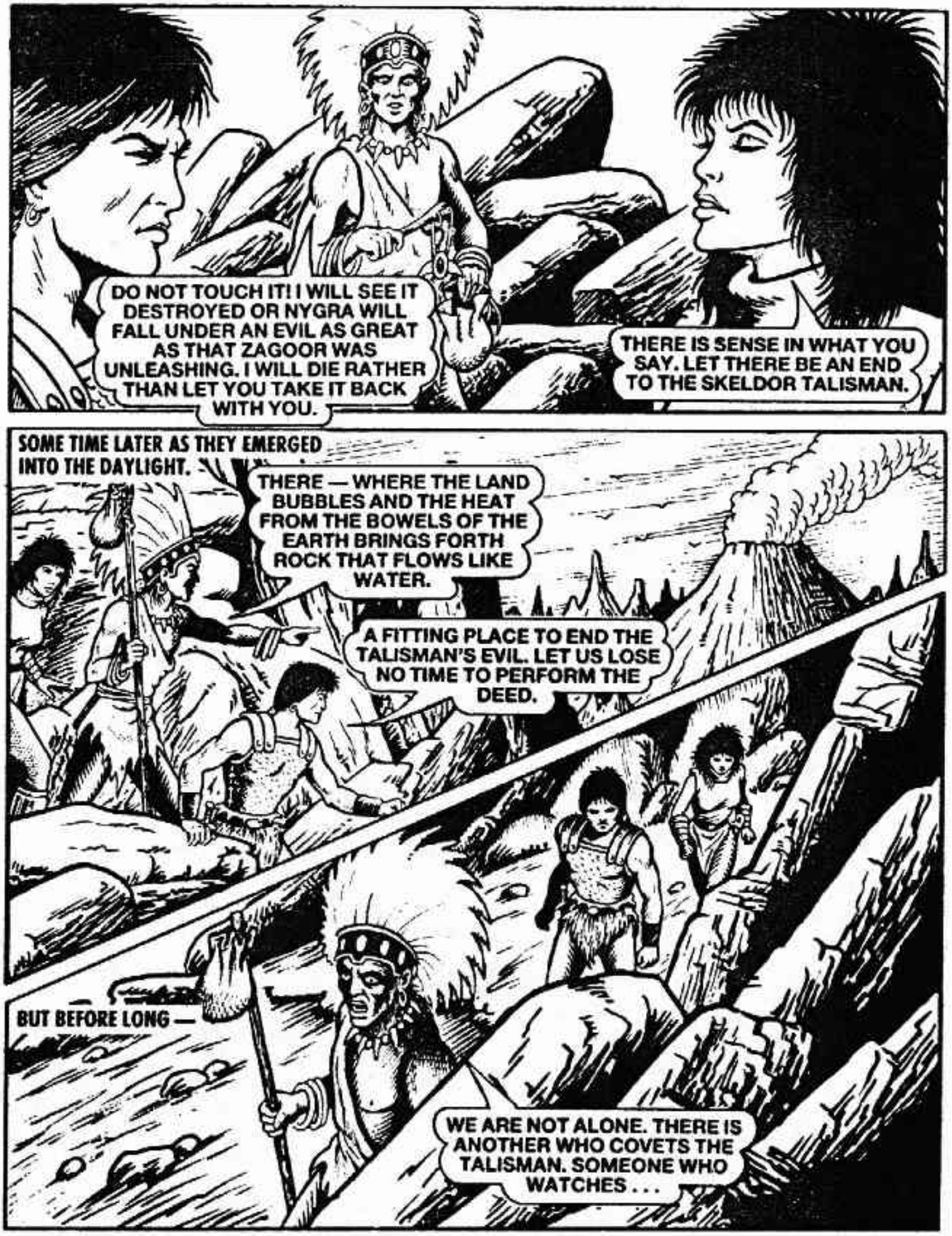
JUST THEN ZAGOOR'S MINIONS SWARMED IN, ATTRACTED BY THE NOISE OF COMBAT.
TO THE MASTER. KILL THE NYGRAN DOGS!


FEEL MAGIC YOURSELF, YOU FIEND, PRINCE OF FEAR!
WHAT THE? MUTA!!

KNOWING HE FACED A POWER FAR GREATER THAN HIS OWN, MUTAI COULD ONLY SHIELD HIMSELF —
YOU BECOME A NUISANCE AGAIN, OLD MAN. THIS TIME THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE.
ARGH!
BUT THE BOLT OF ENERGY HIT THE CAVE ROOF—
BY THE CLAWS OF THE DARK ONE . . . NOOOOO!
DISLODGED BY THE BLAST, TONS OF ROCK AND LAVA RAINED DOWN TOWARDS THE EVIL SHAMAN, WHO WAS FORCED TO PROTECT HIMSELF —
GIVE ME THE POWER!
I CAN'T MISS A CHANCE LIKE THIS!

KAZOR HURLED HIS SWORD—
DIE!
LOOK OUT!
MOMENTS LATER —
THE SKELDOR TALISMAN. I HAVE IT!
SLAUGHTER THE CURSED INTRUDERS!
A BORROWED SWORD . . . IT'LL HAVE TO DO!

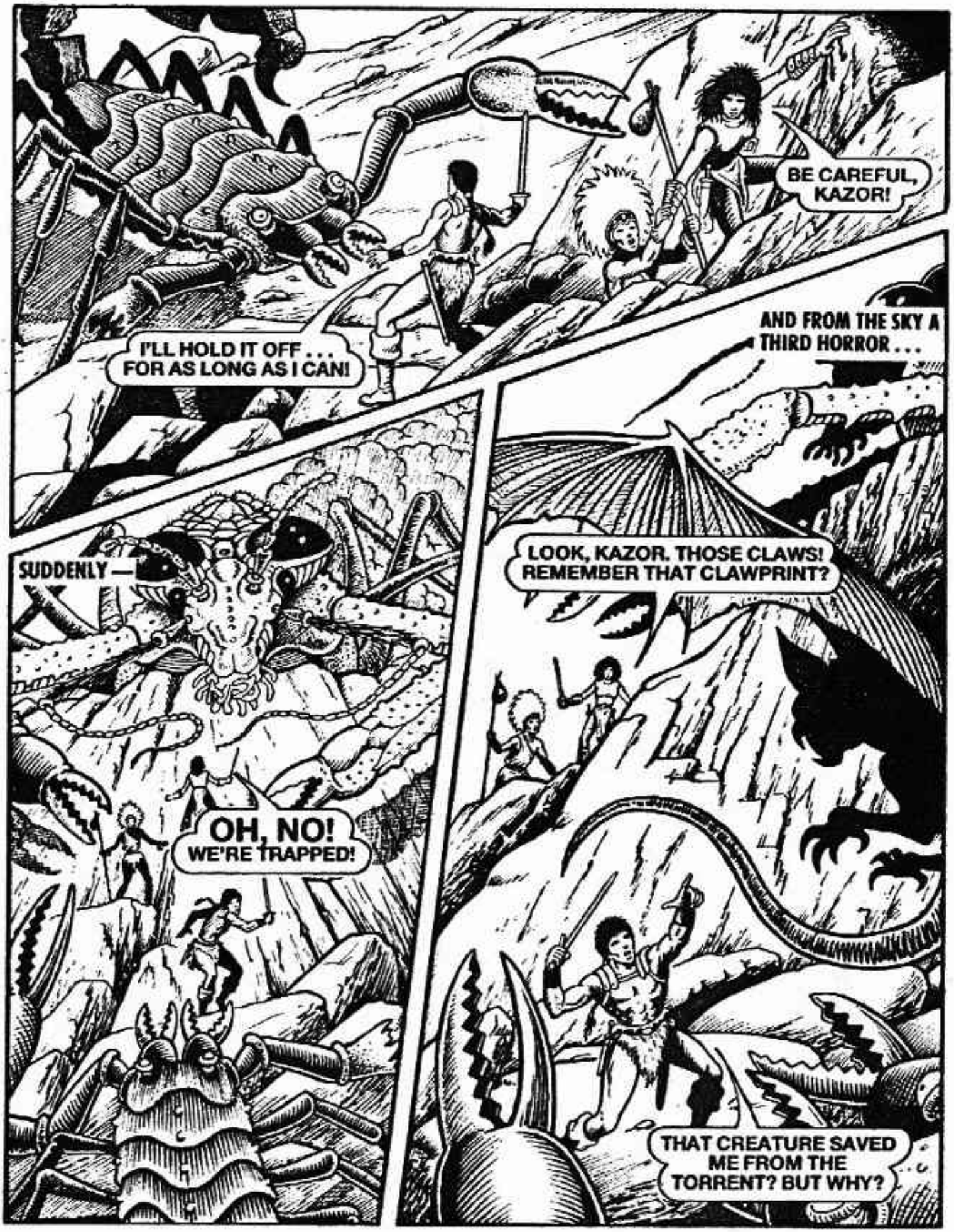
BUT —
BEGONE, TRIBESMEN! BACK TO THE LANDS FROM WHENCE YOU CAME. GO NOW!
AS ONE, THE SAVAGES TURNED SILENTLY AND WERE GONE. THEN —
I . . . I . . . FELT ITS HORRID POWER. I . . .
IT IS OURS. NOW WE CAN DELIVER IT TO THE KING.
NO! THE TALISMAN IS EVIL. I FELT ITS CORRUPTING INFLUENCE. NO MORTAL HAS THE RIGHT TO WIELD ITS POWER.
HE'S RIGHT, MELSA. THE PRINCE OF FEAR IS DEAD AND THE THREAT TO NYGRA ENDED WITH HIM. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!


DO NOT TOUCH IT! I WILL SEE IT DESTROYED OR NYGRA WILL FALL UNDER AN EVIL AS GREAT AS THAT ZAGOOR WAS UNLEASHING. I WILL DIE RATHER THAN LET YOU TAKE IT BACK WITH YOU.
THERE IS SENSE IN WHAT YOU SAY. LET THERE BE AN END TO THE SKELDOR TALISMAN.
SOME TIME LATER AS THEY EMERGED INTO THE DAYLIGHT.
THERE — WHERE THE LAND BUBBLES AND THE HEAT FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH BRINGS FORTH ROCK THAT FLOWS LIKE WATER.
A FITTING PLACE TO END THE TALISMAN'S EVIL. LET US LOSE NO TIME TO PERFORM THE DEED.
BUT BEFORE LONG —
WE ARE NOT ALONE. THERE IS ANOTHER WHO COVETS THE TALISMAN. SOMEONE WHO WATCHES . . .

THE OLD SHAMAN WAS RIGHT —
CURSE YOU, SHAMAN. MY PLANS WILL NOT BE FOILED NOW. NOTHING WILL STAND IN MY WAY — ESPECIALLY YOU! DO MY BIDDING, CREATURES OF THE ABYSS!

SOME TIME LATER —
SOMETHING COMES! PREPARE TO USE THE TALISMAN, MUTAI.
I DAREN'T, MELSA. FOR I TOO COULD BECOME A SLAVE TO ITS POWER!

JUST THEN THE FIRST OF THAANU'S CREATURES ATTACKED.
BY THE GODS!


BE CAREFUL, KAZOR!
I'LL HOLD IT OFF . . . FOR AS LONG AS I CAN!
AND FROM THE SKY A THIRD HORROR . . .
SUDDENLY —
OH, NO! WE'RE TRAPPED!
LOOK, KAZOR. THOSE CLAWS! REMEMBER THAT CLAWPRINT?
THAT CREATURE SAVED ME FROM THE TORRENT? BUT WHY?

OF COURSE!! WE WERE BEING USED TO FIND THE TALISMAN!
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TALISMAN MUST NOT BE PREVENTED. I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO USE IT! MAY THE GODS HELP ME — GIVE ME STRENGTH!
FEEL THE POWER OF MUTAI, HELLSPAWN!
SECONDS LATER THE POWER OF THE TALISMAN COURSED THROUGH THE OLD SHAMAN.
LOOK OUT!

AND —
BACK TO YOUR OWNER, WHOEVER HE MAY BE, CREATURE! DO MY BIDDING NOW.
WE MUST TAKE THE TALISMAN FROM HIM, MELSA. SEE WHAT IT IS DOING TO HIM.

KAZOR WRENCHED THE TALISMAN FROM MUTAI'S NECK.
NO! NO! I MUST KEEP IT. I FELT SO ALIVE. I COULD DO SUCH GOOD IN THIS LAND WITH IT. GIVE —
DESTROY IT, KAZOR. DESTROY IT NOW!

THE EVIL OF THE SKELDOR TALISMAN IS ENDED — FOREVER! I COULD HAVE KEPT IT . . . AND ITS POWER. WHAT NOW OF YOUR THIEF, MELSA?

AT THAT MOMENT, IN ZAMUZHAR.
STOP! HEED ME!
AS THE POWER EBBED AWAY, THE HORRIFIC CREATURES TURNED ON THAANU . . .

AIIIEEEEEEE!
. . . AND WITH A MIGHTY EXPLOSION OF OCCULT ENERGY, THAANU AND HIS EVIL DIED.

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DON'T MISS
THIS MONTH'S OTHER
ACTION-PACKED
ADVENTURE
STARBLAZER
FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 227
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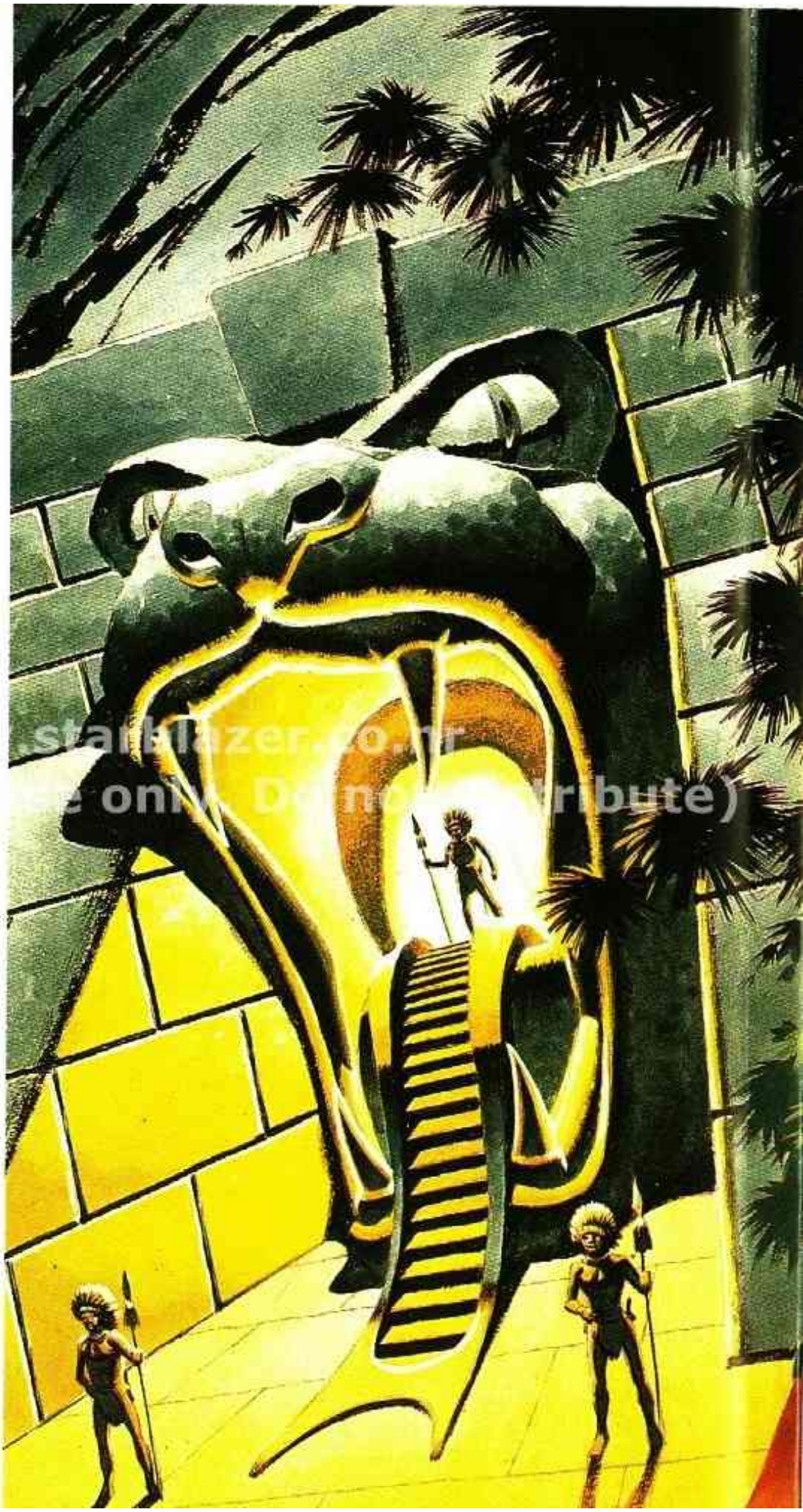
ROGUE COP'S RETURN
NOW ON SALE

PRINCE OF FEAR

Kazor was a petty thief with big ideas. In fact one of his ideas was too big for him to handle, and he landed in jail. It was then he was given a choice . . . rot in prison, or undertake a task so dangerous no sane person would consider. The result was almost certain death — in both cases.